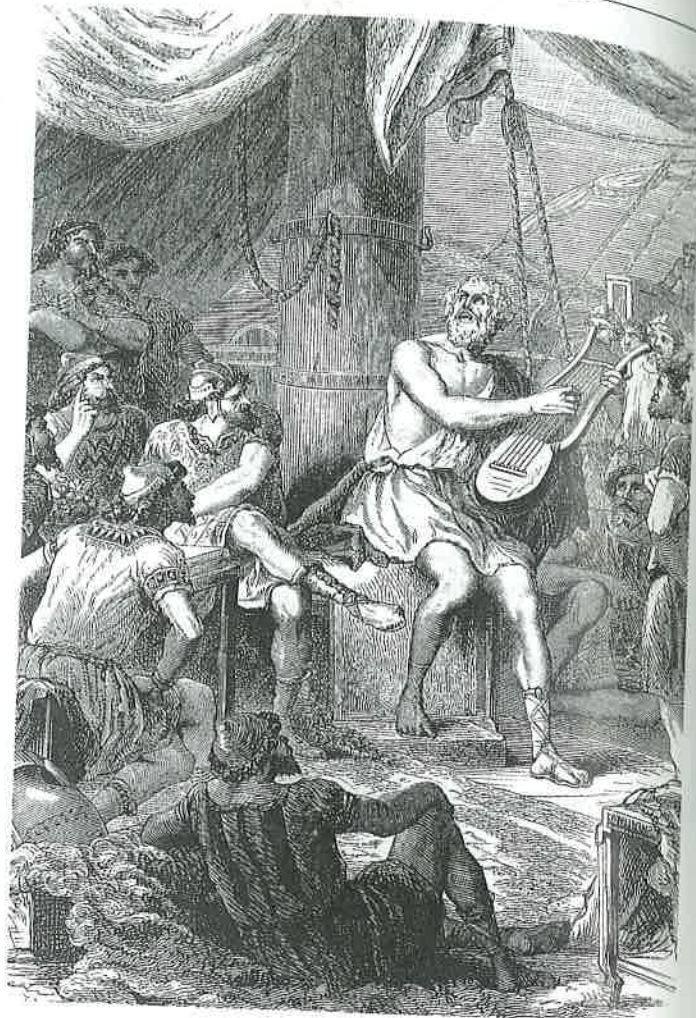


BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

- While facts about Homer himself are not available, a great deal is known about the role of poets and the stories they sang or recited in the days before writing. From this information, it may be possible to infer some things about Homer's training. Like other oral poets, he probably spent years learning his art. The demand for master poets grew as their reputation spread, and as a student, Homer probably traveled from city to city with his teacher, listening and learning the secrets of the trade.
- Although they were rarely aristocrats by birth, poet-singers were often treated royally by patrons who valued the entertainment they could provide at great occasions. Sometimes their fame could be a disadvantage. It is said that unscrupulous nobles in Greece had their favorite singers blinded so that they would be compelled to perform for them for the rest of their lives.



Homer sings a poem to sailors.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- cower** (kou'ər) *v.* to crouch or shrink back, as in fear or shame; p. 853
- impudence** (im'pyə dāns) *n.* speech or behavior that is aggressively forward or rude; p. 858
- mortified** (môr'tə fīd') *adj.* deeply embarrassed, shamed, or humiliated; p. 859
- rebuke** (ri būk') *v.* to scold sharply; criticize; p. 859
- guise** (gīz) *n.* outward appearance; false appearance; p. 859

- renowned** (ri nound') *adj.* famous; widely known; p. 861
- commandeer** (kom'ən dēr') *v.* to seize by force or threats; p. 862
- justification** (jus'tə fə kā'shən) *n.* a reason for an action that shows it to be just, right, or reasonable; p. 863
- omen** (ō'mən) *n.* a sign or event thought to foretell good or bad fortune; forewarning; p. 865
- contemptible** (kən tēmp'tə bəl) *adj.* deserving of scorn; disgraceful; p. 865

Part 3

Father and Son

The kindly Phaeacians load Odysseus with gifts and take him home, leaving him fast asleep on the shores of Ithaca. On their return journey, Poseidon turns their ship into a lump of stone for daring to assist Odysseus.

Odysseus is disoriented after twenty years away from home, but the goddess Athena meets him and tells him what happened: during his long absence, a number of young men from Ithaca and neighboring islands have moved into Odysseus's great house. Thinking Odysseus is dead, the suitors, as they are called, eat his food, drink his wine, and insist that Odysseus's wife Penelope choose one of them as her husband. Penelope, who still loves Odysseus and prays for his safe return, has put off a decision as long as she can, but the situation has become very tense.

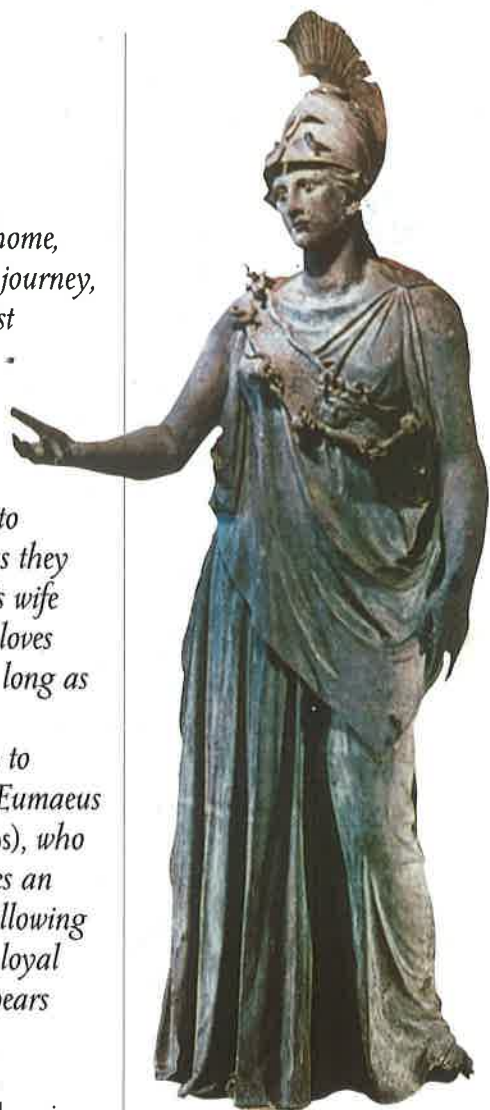
Athena disguises Odysseus as an old beggar and promises to help him. She tells him to seek shelter with a swineherd named Eumaeus (yoo mē' əs). Meanwhile, Odysseus's son, Telemachus (tə lem' ə kəs), who had set out on a journey to discover the fate of his father, escapes an ambush planned by the suitors and secretly lands on Ithaca. Following Athena's instructions, he also goes to Eumaeus's hut. While the loyal swineherd is informing Penelope of her son's return, Athena appears to the disguised Odysseus.

From the air

- she walked, taking the form of a tall woman,
handsome and clever at her craft, and stood
beyond the gate in plain sight of Odysseus,
5 unseen, though, by Telemachus, unguessed,
for not to everyone will gods appear.^o
Odysseus noticed her; so did the dogs,
who cowered whimpering away from her. She only
nodded, signing to him with her brows,
10 a sign he recognized. Crossing the yard,
he passed out through the gate in the stockade
to face the goddess. There she said to him:

Vocabulary

cower (kou'ər) *v.* to crouch or shrink back, as in fear or shame



Statue of Athena, 340–330 B.C. Bronze. National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

1–6 From . . . appear: Athena's "craft" includes the ability to disguise herself or others and to make herself visible or invisible. She has already made Odysseus appear to be an old beggar. Now she makes herself visible to Odysseus and, at the same time, invisible to his son Telemachus.



15 “Son of Laertes and the gods of old,
Odysseus, master of land ways and sea ways,
dissemble^o to your son no longer now.
The time has come: tell him how you together
will bring doom on the suitors in the town.
I shall not be far distant then, for I
myself desire battle.”

20 she tipped her golden wand upon the man,
making his cloak pure white, and the knit tunic
fresh around him. Lithe and young she made him,
ruddy^o with sun, his jawline clean, the beard
25 no longer gray upon his chin. And she
withdrew when she had done.

Then Lord Odysseus
reappeared—and his son was thunderstruck.^o
Fear in his eyes, he looked down and away
as though it were a god, and whispered:

you are no longer what you were just now!
Your cloak is new; even your skin! You are
one of the gods who rule the sweep of heaven!
35 Be kind to us, we'll make you fair oblation°
and gifts of hammered gold. Have mercy on us!"

The noble and enduring man replied:

40 “No god. Why take me for a god? No, no.
I am that father whom your boyhood lacked
and suffered pain for lack of. I am he.”

Held back too long, the tears ran down his cheeks as he embraced his son.

45 uncomprehending,^o wild
 with incredulity,^o cried out:

“You cannot
be my father Odysseus! Meddling spirits
conceived this trick to twist the knife in me!^o
No man of woman born could work these wonders

15 dissemble: pretend.

24 ruddy: tanned.

28 thunderstruck: astonished. The word is carefully chosen for its additional association with the works of one of the gods (Zeus).

35 **make you fair oblation:** offer you good sacrifices and proper worship.

44 **uncomprehending**: not understanding.

45 incredulity: disbelief.

47–48 Meddling . . . me: Telemachus assumes that interfering gods (**Meddling spirits**) thought up (**conceived**) this astonishing transformation to intensify his pain (**twist the knife**) over his father's long absence and possible death.

50 by his own craft, unless a god came into it
with ease to turn him young or old at will.
I swear you were in rags and old,
and here you stand like one of the immortals!"^o

55 Odysseus brought his ranging mind to bear^o
and said:

"This is not princely, to be swept
away by wonder at your father's presence.
No other Odysseus will ever come,
for he and I are one, the same; his bitter
60 fortune and his wanderings are mine.
Twenty years gone, and I am back again
on my own island.

As for my change of skin,
that is a charm Athena, Hope of Soldiers,^o
65 uses as she will; she has the knack
to make me seem a beggar man sometimes
and sometimes young, with finer clothes about me.
It is no hard thing for the gods of heaven
to glorify a man or bring him low."^o

70 When he had spoken, down he sat.

Then, throwing

his arms around this marvel of a father
Telemachus began to weep. Salt tears
rose from the wells of longing in both men,
75 and cries burst from both as keen and fluttering
as those of the great taloned hawk,
whose nestlings farmers take before they fly.
So helplessly they cried, pouring out tears,
and might have gone on weeping so till sundown,
80 had not Telemachus said:

"Dear father! Tell me

what kind of vessel put you here ashore
on Ithaca? Your sailors, who were they?
I doubt you made it, walking on the sea!"

85 Then said Odysseus, who had borne the barren sea:^o

53 the immortals: a common reference to the gods, who never die.

54 Odysseus . . . bear: Odysseus focuses his thoughts.

64 Hope of Soldiers: When she chooses to be, Athena is a fierce battle-goddess, defending Greece—and favored Greeks—from outside enemies.

68–69 It is . . . low: It isn't difficult for the gods to make a man appear great or humble.

85 borne the barren sea: endured the hardships of the sea.



Penelope and Her Handmaidens, 1920. A. F. Gorguet. Illustration from text *L'illustration*. Private collection.

Viewing the art: What does this image add to your understanding of Penelope and of what life has been like at Odysseus's great house during his absence?

“Only plain truth shall I tell you, child.
 Great seafarers, the Phaeacians, gave me passage
 as they give other wanderers. By night
 over the open ocean, while I slept,
 90 they brought me in their cutter,^o set me down
 on Ithaca, with gifts of bronze and gold
 and stores of woven things. By the gods’ will
 these lie all hidden in a cave. I came
 to this wild place, directed by Athena,
 95 so that we might lay plans to kill our enemies.
 Count up the suitors for me, let me know
 what men at arms are there, how many men.
 I must put all my mind to it, to see
 if we two by ourselves can take them on
 100 or if we should look round for help.”

90 cutter: a single-masted sailboat.

The Beggar at the Manor

The next morning Telemachus returns home and tells Penelope about his travels but not about his father’s homecoming. Odysseus, disguised again as a beggar, also returns to his own house. No one recognizes him except his faithful old dog, which lifts up its head, wags its tail, and dies. In the great hall, Telemachus permits the “beggar” to ask for food. The suitors give him bread and meat, as is the custom, but one of their leaders, a man named Antinous (an tin’ ō əs), is particularly insulting. He refuses to offer any food, and while Odysseus is talking, he angrily interrupts.

But here Antinous broke in, shouting:

“God!

What evil wind blew in this pest?

Get over,

5 stand in the passage! Nudge my table, will you?
 Egyptian whips are sweet
 to what you’ll come to here, you nosing rat,
 making your pitch to everyone!
 These men have bread to throw away on you
 10 because it is not theirs. Who cares? Who spares
 another’s food, when he has more than plenty?”

With guile Odysseus drew away,^o then said:

12 With guile . . . away: Odysseus is slyly provoking Antinous.



“A pity that you have more looks than heart.
You’d grudge a pinch of salt from your own larder
15 to your own handy man. You sit here, fat
on others’ meat, and cannot bring yourself
to rummage out a crust of bread for me!”

Then anger made Antinous’ heart beat hard,
and, glowering^o under his brows, he answered:

20

“Now!

You think you’ll shuffle off and get away
after that impudence? Oh, no you don’t!”

The stool he let fly hit the man’s right shoulder
on the packed muscle under the shoulder blade—
25 like solid rock, for all the effect one saw.
Odysseus only shook his head, containing
thoughts of bloody work,^o as he walked on,
then sat, and dropped his loaded bag again
upon the door sill. Facing the whole crowd
30 he said, and eyed them all:

“One word only,

my lords, and suitors of the famous queen.
One thing I have to say.

35 There is no pain, no burden for the heart
when blows come to a man, and he defending
his own cattle—his own cows and lambs.

Here it was otherwise. Antinous
hit me for being driven on by hunger—
how many bitter seas men cross for hunger!

40 If beggars interest the gods, if there are Furies
pent in the dark to avenge a poor man’s wrong, then may
Antinous meet his death before his wedding day!”^o

Then said Eupheithes’^o son, Antinous:

“Enough.

45 Eat and be quiet where you are, or shamble elsewhere,
unless you want these lads to stop your mouth

19 **glowering**: scowling; looking at angrily.

26–27 **containing thoughts of bloody work**: keeping murderous thoughts under control. Odysseus imagines killing Antinous, but holds his temper.

34–42 **There is . . . wedding day**: A man isn’t really hurt, the beggar says, when he is injured defending his property; but when he is attacked for being hungry, that’s another matter. Odysseus’s curse upon Antinous calls upon the **Furies**—three female spirits who punish wrongdoers—to bring about his death.

43 **Eupheithes** (yoo pē’ thēz)

Vocabulary

impudence (im’ pyə dāns) *n.* speech or behavior that is aggressively forward or rude

pulling you by the heels, or hands and feet,
over the whole floor, till your back is peeled!"

But now the rest were mortified, and someone
50 spoke from the crowd of young bucks to rebuke him:

"A poor show, that—hitting this famished tramp—
bad business, if he happened to be a god.
You know they go in foreign guise, the gods do,
55 looking like strangers, turning up
in towns and settlements to keep an eye
on manners, good or bad."

But at this notion

Antinous only shrugged.

Telemachus,

60 after the blow his father bore, sat still
without a tear, though his heart felt the blow.
Slowly he shook his head from side to side,
containing murderous thoughts.

Penelope

65 on the higher level of her room had heard
the blow, and knew who gave it. Now she murmured:

"Would god you could be hit yourself, Antinous—
hit by Apollo's bowshot!"⁶⁸

And Eurynome⁶⁹

70 her housekeeper, put in:

"He and no other?

If all we pray for came to pass, not one
would live till dawn!"

Her gentle mistress said:

75 "Oh, Nan, they are a bad lot; they intend
ruin for all of us; but Antinous
appears a blacker-hearted hound than any.

Vocabulary

mortified (môr' tə fīd') *adj.* deeply embarrassed, shamed, or humiliated

rebuke (rī būk') *v.* to scold sharply; criticize

guise (gīz) *n.* outward appearance; false appearance

68 Apollo's bowshot: Among other things, Apollo is the archer god and the god of truth. His sacred silver bow can kill literally with an arrow, and figuratively with the truth.

69 Eurynome (yoo rin' ə mē)



Here is a poor man come, a wanderer,
driven by want to beg his bread, and everyone
80 in hall gave bits, to cram his bag—only
Antinous threw a stool, and banged his shoulder!”

So she described it, sitting in her chamber
among her maids—while her true lord was eating.
Then she called in the forester and said:

85 “Go to that man on my behalf, Eumaeus,^o
and send him here, so I can greet and question him.
Abroad in the great world, he may have heard
rumors about Odysseus—may have known him!”

85 Eumaeus (yoo mē’ əs)

Lively action continues in the great hall, where another beggar attempts to bully Odysseus. Antinous mockingly arranges a boxing match between the two, which Odysseus wins. Telemachus orders the disorderly crowd to leave for the evening. Surprised by his authority, the suitors obey, giving Odysseus and Telemachus time to remove all weapons from the hall as part of their preparation for battle. Then Odysseus goes to meet his wife for the first time in nearly twenty years.

Carefully Penelope began:

90 “Friend, let me ask you first of all:
who are you, where do you come from, of what nation
and parents were you born?”

And he replied:

“My lady, never a man in the wide world
95 should have a fault to find with you. Your name
has gone out under heaven like the sweet
honor of some god-fearing king, who rules
in equity^o over the strong: his black lands bear
both wheat and barley, fruit trees laden bright,
100 new lambs at lambing time—and the deep sea
gives great hauls of fish by his good strategy,
so that his folk fare well.

98 equity: fairness and justice.

O my dear lady,

this being so, let it suffice^o to ask me
105 of other matters—not my blood, my homeland.
Do not enforce me to recall my pain.
My heart is sore; but I must not be found
sitting in tears here, in another’s house:

104 suffice: be enough.



Odysseus Reunited with Penelope. Terra-cotta relief. Louvre Museum, Paris.

110 it is not well forever to be grieving.
One of the maids might say—or you might think—
I had got maudlin^o over cups of wine.”

And Penelope replied:

“Stranger, my looks,
my face, my carriage,^o were soon lost or faded
115 when the Achaeans crossed the sea to Troy,
Odysseus my lord among the rest.
If he returned, if he were here to care for me,
I might be happily renowned!
But grief instead heaven sent me—years of pain.
120 Sons of the noblest families on the islands,
Dulichium, Same, wooded Zacynthus,
with native Ithacans, are here to court me,
against my wish; and they consume this house.
Can I give proper heed to guest or suppliant^o
125 or herald^o on the realm’s affairs?

How could I?

wasted with longing for Odysseus, while here
they press for marriage.

Vocabulary

renowned (ri noun’d) *adj.* famous; widely known

111 **maudlin**: excessively and foolishly emotional.

114 **carriage**: manner of moving or holding the head and body.

124 **suppliant** (sup’ lē ant): one who humbly begs or requests something.

125 **herald**: court messenger.



- Ruses° served my turn
- 130 to draw the time out—first a close-grained web
I had the happy thought to set up weaving
on my big loom in hall. I said, that day:
'Young men—my suitors, now my lord is dead,
let me finish my weaving before I marry,
135 or else my thread will have been spun in vain.
It is a shroud I weave for Lord Laertes°
when cold Death comes to lay him on his bier.°
The country wives would hold me in dishonor
if he, with all his fortune, lay unshrouded.'
- 140 I reached their hearts that way, and they agreed.
So every day I wove on the great loom,
but every night by torchlight I unwove it;
and so for three years I deceived the Achaeans.
But when the seasons brought a fourth year on,
145 as long months waned,° and the long days were spent,
through impudent folly in the slinking maids
they caught me—clamored up to me at night;°
I had no choice then but to finish it.
And now, as matters stand at last,
150 I have no strength left to evade a marriage,
cannot find any further way; my parents
urge it upon me, and my son
will not stand by while they eat up his property.
He comprehends it, being a man full grown,
155 able to oversee the kind of house
Zeus would endow° with honor.

The Test of the Bow

Resigned to ending the suitors' reign over her home, Penelope cries herself to sleep that night, dreaming of the husband she believes is lost forever. The next day the suitors return to the hall, more unruly than ever. Penelope appears, carrying the huge bow that belongs to Odysseus. Her maids follow, bearing twelve iron ax heads. Penelope has a proposition for the suitors.

"My lords, hear me:
suitors indeed, you commandeered this house
to feast and drink in, day and night, my husband

Vocabulary

commandeer (kom' ən dēr') *v.* to seize by force or threats

129 Ruses: tricks; schemes.

136 It is . . . Laertes: Penelope has claimed to be weaving a burial cloth (shroud) for Odysseus's father.

137 bier: a platform on which a corpse or coffin is placed before burial.

145 waned: drew to an end.

146–147 through . . . night: After outwitting the suitors for more than three years, Penelope is finally betrayed by some of her own sneaky (slinking) maids, who crept into her room at night and caught her in the act of undoing her weaving.

156 endow: provide or equip.

- being long gone, long out of mind. You found
 no justification for yourselves—none
 except your lust to marry me. Stand up, then:
 we now declare a contest for that prize.
 Here is my lord Odysseus' hunting bow.
 Bend and string it if you can. Who sends an arrow
 through iron axe-helve sockets, twelve in line?⁹
 I join my life with his, and leave this place, my home,
 my rich and beautiful bridal house, forever
 to be remembered, though I dream it only."

One by one the suitors try to string the bow, and all fail. Only Antinous delays his attempt. In the meantime, Odysseus steps outside with the swineherd Eumaeus and Philoetius (fī loi' tē əs), another faithful herdsman, and reveals his identity to them. Odysseus returns to the hall and asks to try his hand at stringing the bow. Antinous sneers at this idea, but Penelope and Telemachus both insist he proceed. Telemachus orders the women to leave, Philoetius locks the gates of the hall, and Eumaeus presents to Odysseus the great bow he has not held for twenty years.

- And Odysseus took his time,
 15 turning the bow, tapping it, every inch,
 for borings that termites might have made
 while the master of the weapon was abroad.
 The suitors were now watching him, and some
 jested among themselves:

- 20 "A bow lover!"

"Dealer in old bows!"

"Maybe he has one like it
 at home!"

"Or has an itch to make one for himself."

- 25 "See how he handles it, the sly old buzzard!"¹⁰

And one disdainful suitor added this:

9–10 Bend . . . line: The challenge has two parts: First, a suitor must bend and string the heavy bow—a task requiring strength and skill. Second, he must shoot an arrow through the narrow holes of twelve ax-heads set in a row.

14–25 And Odysseus . . . old buzzard: As Odysseus examines the old bow for termite holes (**borings**) that might have weakened the wood since he last used it, the suitors take the chance to make fun of the "beggars."

Vocabulary

justification (jus' tə fə kā' shən) *n.* a reason for an action that shows it to be just, right, or reasonable



"May his fortune grow an inch for every inch he bends it!"

- But the man skilled in all ways of contending,
satisfied by the great bow's look and heft,^o
30 like a musician, like a harper, when
with quiet hand upon his instrument
he draws between his thumb and forefinger
a sweet new string upon a peg: so effortlessly
Odysseus in one motion strung the bow.
35 Then slid his right hand down the cord and plucked it,

29 heft: weight.



Odysseus Competes with the Suitors (detail). 5th century B.C., Greek. Attic red-figured skyphos. Staatliche Museum, Antikensammlung, Berlin, Germany.

Viewing the art: What do you suppose Odysseus is thinking as he takes aim?

so the taut gut^o vibrating hummed and sang
a swallow's note.

In the hushed hall it smote^o the suitors
and all their faces changed. Then Zeus thundered
overhead, one loud crack for a sign.
40 And Odysseus laughed within him that the son
of crooked-minded Cronus had flung that omen down.^o
He picked one ready arrow from his table
where it lay bare: the rest were waiting still
45 in the quiver for the young men's turn to come.^o
He nocked it,^o let it rest across the handgrip,
and drew the string and grooved butt of the arrow,
aiming from where he sat upon the stool.

Now flashed

50 arrow from twanging bow clean as a whistle
through every socket ring, and grazed^o not one,
to thud with heavy brazen head^o beyond.

Then quietly

Odysseus said:

55 "Telemachus, the stranger
you welcomed in your hall has not disgraced you.
I did not miss, neither did I take all day
stringing the bow. My hand and eye are sound,
not so contemptible as the young men say.
60 The hour has come to cook their lordships' mutton^o—
supper by daylight. Other amusements later,
with song and harping that adorn a feast."

He dropped his eyes and nodded, and the prince
Telemachus, true son of King Odysseus,
65 belted his sword on, clapped hand to his spear,
and with a clink and glitter of keen bronze
stood by his chair, in the forefront near his father.



36 **taut gut**: tightly drawn bowstring
(made of animal "gut" or intestine).

38 **smote**: struck, as though from a hard
blow; affected suddenly with a powerful
and unexpected feeling, such as fear.

39–42 **Then Zeus . . . down**: Odysseus
recognizes the crack of thunder as a sign
that Zeus is on his side.

44–45 **the rest . . . come**: The remain-
ing arrows will be used by the contestants
who follow Odysseus.

46 **nocked it**: fitted the nock, or notched
end, of the arrow into the string.

51 **grazed**: touched.

52 **brazen head**: brass arrowhead.

60 **cook their lordships' mutton**:
literally, cook their sheep meat. But
Odysseus is using a phrase that
Telemachus can take metaphorically,
like the phrase *cook their goose*
("get even").

Vocabulary

omen (ō' mən) *n.* a sign or event thought to foretell good or bad fortune;
forewarning

contemptible (kən temp' tə bəl) *adj.* deserving of scorn; disgraceful



Responding to Literature

Personal Response

Did any aspects of Odysseus's behavior surprise you in part 3? Explain, telling what you might have done if you were in his place.

ANALYZING PART 3

RECALL AND INTERPRET

1. What role does Athena play in reuniting Odysseus with his son, Telemachus? Give two reasons why Telemachus might have had trouble identifying his father.
2. In the first 85 lines of "The Beggar at the Manor," find at least two examples of **foreshadowing** that the suitors will be punished.
3. Why does Penelope summon Odysseus? What is **ironic** about her interview with him? What does his restraint say about his character?
4. What is "the test of the bow"? In your opinion, is this a fair test? Explain your answer.

EVALUATE AND CONNECT

5. In your opinion, is the recognition scene between Telemachus and Odysseus true-to-life? Explain why or why not.
6. Describe how Homer establishes Antinous as Odysseus's principal **antagonist** among the suitors. (See Literary Terms Handbook, page R1.)
7. What do you think of Antinous's behavior toward the "beggar"? Do people treat each other this way today? Explain.
8. Paraphrase lines 28–37 of "The Test of the Bow." Why do you suppose Homer uses an **epic simile** to describe this moment? (See page R5.)

EXTENDING YOUR RESPONSE

Literature Groups

Assessing Options Odysseus is planning to make the suitors pay for their behavior—but do they all deserve the same fate? What do you predict will happen? What do you want to happen? Discuss these questions in your group. Then discuss the advantages and disadvantages of two opposite courses of action available to Odysseus and Telemachus. Call one "Let 'em have it" and the other "Let's be reasonable." Vote on which course of action you prefer. Share your results with the class.

Personal Writing

A Sweet Reunion Reread "Father and Son" from part 3. Then imagine that you are either Odysseus or Telemachus. Write in your journal what you were thinking and feeling when you became reunited with your loved one. Remember that it's been twenty years since the two have seen each other and that Telemachus was just a little boy when his father left home.

 **Save your work for your portfolio.**

Literary ELEMENTS

Characterization

Characterization is the method a writer uses to reveal a character's personality. In **indirect characterization**, a character's personality is revealed through the character's words, thoughts, or actions or through those of other characters. In **direct characterization**, direct statements are made about a character's personality.

1. What methods of characterization does Homer use to reveal Penelope's personality? Support your ideas with examples.
2. For another character in part 3, find an action, a line or two of dialogue, or another clue to characterization. Tell what this evidence suggests about the character's personality.

• See **Literary Terms Handbook**, p. R2.